

STATEMENT FROM FORMER MEMBERS  
UNC-CHAPEL HILL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

January 16, 2019

UNC-Chapel Hill is our nation's oldest public university and among its finest. The UNC System is the state's most important asset. Strong, accomplished leaders have helped UNC be a catalyst for growth that has made a positive impact in every corner of our state. Today, however, the University faces challenges created by the very people charged with governing it. Tuesday's actions against Chancellor Carol Folt have left us unable to stay silent any longer.

Contemplating how to accommodate the complex history of UNC has been at the forefront of many discussions during the past decade, particularly since 2015 when the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees voted to change the name of Saunders Hall to Carolina Hall and contextualize the campus monuments. No one enters those decisions lightly. Thousands of hours were spent trying to find the best way to move forward, especially in light of growing hostilities — on many sides — around the presence of Silent Sam. This was made almost impossible, however, by the hastily passed legislation which prohibited moving the statue. Two exceptions were provided by that legislation and Chancellor Folt invoked one Monday when she ordered the removal of the remnants of Silent Sam from McCorkle Place to stop the violence that had occurred and would continue to occur as long as it stood at the front door of Chapel Hill's campus. It is within any University chancellor's authority to protect the safety of the students, faculty, staff and visitors on campus.

Since arriving at Chapel Hill, Carol Folt has stood strong for the University. We are much better for the work she has done. However, during her tenure, increasing pressure from Raleigh and the Board of Governors has put politics ahead of the best interests of education, research, and patient care. Silent Sam came to embody it all.

Tuesday, Chancellor Folt paid the price for her leadership and North Carolina lost another great opportunity to resurrect its history as a progressive part of this nation. Instead of allowing Chancellor Folt to leave office on her terms — at the end of this academic year — the Board of Governors held an emergency session and forced her to resign in two weeks. It is the same protocol the Board exercised when President Margaret Spellings resigned. The Board could not be satisfied to let them leave on their own terms.

We stand together in our support of Chancellor Folt. Regardless of one's view on Silent Sam, the Confederate monument had become a lightening rod for violence and intolerance on this campus and had to be removed. We realize taking it down quickly was controversial. It is our hope that we will not have to continue fighting the Civil War by trying to resurrect it elsewhere on campus.

UNC has been a beacon for progress in North Carolina over the past 225 years. At this nation's beginnings the leaders of our state understood the value of educating its citizens and chartered a university with access for all. Now, it is our collective responsibility to govern for the common good, rather than based on individual political preferences.

We are proud of Folt's leadership in making Carolina a better place and, in doing so, making North Carolina better. We ask now that those charged with governing UNC put aside divisiveness so we can implement our shared, core mission for the people of this state.

Tim Burnett

Jean Kitchin

Phil Clay

Tom Lambeth

Don Curtis

Steve Lerner

John Ellison

Roger Perry

Paul Fulton

Phil Phillips

Peter Grauer

Sallie Shuping Russell

Wade Hargrove

Nelson Schwab

John Harris

John Townsend

Barbara Hyde

Richard "Stick" Williams

Kel Landis

Bob Winston